

**White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation
Day 2 Breakout Session Compilation**

Topic: Using Science and Technology to Reach Cooperative Conservation Goals

Session number: 52

Afternoon

Facilitator: Scott McCreary

Location: 225

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion. *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

1. Taking stock of existing conditions and setting goals

- Understanding the resource data shows stakeholders to see what they have in common, helps to define context or “decision space” where options can be considered and creates a framework to overlay values.
- There is an important role for synthesizing and interpreting science.
- Maps are a good way of making it accessible. Transparency is important.
- Scientists and researchers are not rewarded for engaging in monitoring or synthesis of scientific information
- Monitoring shows progress and builds momentum.
- Mapping technology, different alternatives is very powerful in framing goals and objectives.
- Proprietary assumptions prevents people from sharing their data or letting others analyze it).

2. Meeting challenges

- Create and support a specialty in science communication geared at multiple audiences. Don’t assume that scientists are the only communicators
- We need to get away from the “What does the science say” narrow view.
- This is true because we get lost in “use the best data” kind of talk.
- Restructure funding for science: Real dollars for conservation science have declined. Scaling or change messages change for speaking to different audiences?
- We must better communicate that achievements

B. National-level Practical Actions *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO’s, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

National initiatives

- The bottom-up citizen based model (in Washington state example – NW Straits) has been successful because it’s tied to local government, appoints local people, looks at broad information set. It’s citizen driven but with

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oversight and coordination with governments. And its bounded by benchmarks. And it's been very successful.

- Help politicians make long term commitments. Politicians want quick success. We need long term institutionalized programs. Build political will.
 - If cooperative conservation is an entity it needs to have an identity.
Give serious consideration to international protocols
- Decentralize the program to the states.
- Revise rules that constrain essential participation, e.g FACA.
- Create a clearinghouse to access grants
- Building capacity, shield from liability and increase training
- Communicate success.

C. **Local-level Practical Actions** *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

Local initiatives

- Look to the NEP, NW Straits and Community Wildfire Protection Plans as potential models.
- Commit to long term (5-8 year projects).

D. **Quotes from participants** that capture the essence of key points made during the group's discussion.

- "Science means three things: the scientific process, the knowledge generated, and the body of people called scientists. We need to be clear about our meaning.
- We need to stop and say "What does the science tell us and ask what does the knowledge tell us".

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Facilitator: Dave Ceppos

Location: 226

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion. *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

Important to establish mutual agreement on what constitutes credible science. There are various ways to achieve this, ranging everywhere from development of national peer review systems, to small group specific rules of engagement. Regardless of method, it is nonetheless a very compelling need.

- Need to consider incentives to developing mutual agreement, such as reprimands and/or rewards.

Need to further discuss the benefits and drawbacks to creating a national data system. The system could include but not be limited to protocols for collection, use, management, update, sharing, etc. There were very diverse strong feelings about this suggestion.

Need new tools, including but not limited to policies and legislation, to support adding monitoring to all conservation programs with commensurate funding.

Need to involve stakeholders at the most localized level and at the onset to identify what the key questions, determine the methods to answering the questions, advise on the resource requirements to support the effort, etc.

Need to honor and respect cultural norms and local anecdotal data that is provided by indigenous people, large land owners, mutli-generational families, etc. These data sources and the information they provide need to be considered equivalent to other more traditional/academic scientific endeavors.

B. National-level Practical Actions *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

We should consider as an action an evaluation of how much existing law poses an impediment to cooperative cooperation and we need to evaluate the role that existing resource laws have on encouraging/mandating the use of science and technology in monitoring cooperative conservation.

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We need to consider either nontraditional interpretations of NEPA, or restructuring NEPA as a means to better accommodate adaptive management, ranges of potential scenarios, ranges of potential actions, etc.

C. Local-level Practical Actions *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

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Afternoon

Facilitator: Larry Fisher and Doug Sarno

Location: 227 & 228

A. Major Repeated Themes Raised in the Discussion. *A grouping of ideas repeated with some frequency in the session and brought up again during the group summation process. Also includes diverging views and/or questions about the topic.*

- Scale and scope of information is important
- Personal value of information and societal value of information
- Need to translate science to a personal/community scale
- Use of modeling and simulation very useful for predictive purposes
- Need to communicate science in language, context, and terms that the public understands and trusts
- Science needs to be put in the proper context within the collaborative process. We need to understand the appropriateness and usefulness of scientific knowledge in helping to make decisions.
- Important to understand and translate measures of risk and uncertainty to the public.
- The science and scholarship of engaging people is just as valid as “hard” science.
- Better use of forecasting, modeling and simulation to aid risk assessment
- Packing information and assembling data to communicate uncertainty
- Better data reliability in data (e.g., ensure that governments keep their data updated)
- Originator of data is best suited to maintain it
- Use of neutral third parties to facilitate process and translate information between parties
- Sometimes we are too quick to use science. We sometimes try to understand a problem and then go directly to a solution. Need to get people together to determine the problem..
- Science can get you to know what the risk is, but then you must determine the acceptable level of risk. Adaptive management is about doing this. Monitor performing several actions and determine which action gives you the best outcome.

Obstacles	Solutions
Data sharing among federal agencies.	Use similar sources of data. Avoid redundancy. Work with universities for access. Convene at the state or local level.
NEPA planning horizon (10-15 years) versus longer term planning needs.	
Conservation education dwindling. Disconnect with the land, urbanization.	Advocate reinstatement of Environmental Education Act and general conservation education.
Ownership of spatially explicit information (public vs. private, FOIA impact, confidentiality issues)	Seek a third party, non-federal neutral keeper of the data and facilitate the process.

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Challenges of implementing adaptive management.	Treat adaptive management as an experiment with a more formal structure to test, monitor, adapt and implement.
Lack of scientific knowledge of judges in terms of environmental litigation.	Explore use of Master Scientific Advisors to help evaluate cases and make decisions.
Lack of trust in scientists or credible science.	Find and fund scientists who can interpret and communicate science to community.
NEPA as impediment to cooperative conservation	Encourage more cooperating agency and co-lead status for state and local government agencies.

B. National-level Practical Actions *that could be taken by the Federal government, national NGO's, and other national organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

- Facilitate relationships between scientists and users/communities.
- Strengthen environmental and conservation education, for example, by reinstating the Environmental Education Act and the EPA Small Grants Program
- Strengthen training of federal agencies in cooperative conservation
- Institute a reward system to encourage and foster cooperative conservation, recognize success and encourage innovation
- Engage greater Congressional inter-action and find ways to unify Congressional action, for example to overcome the constraints of committee structure
- Seek legislative relief to litigation related to cooperative conservation, for example, NEPA

C. Local-level Practical Actions *that could be taken at the local or community level by Tribes, state and local communities, private citizens, and local organizations. Diverging views and/or questions are also noted.*

- Explore or strengthen models that link science to practical application with local land owners, for example reevaluating and refunding the Extension Service, and the NRCS state conservation and local conservation districts
- Establish regional mechanisms to address environmental, ecosystem or issue based problems
- Facilitate personal understanding, relationships, and networks
- Utilize research and educational institutions to help facilitate local communication and problem solving.

D. Particularly insightful quotes from participants *that capture the essence of key points made during the group's discussion.*

- Sound science can engender trust and credibility
- Need to understand what the threshold for success. Strive for optimal, but know the threshold.
- Precautionary principle is dangerous because it inhibits risk taking.
- You live on earth, you have risk.
- "Citizen science" as an important element of cooperative conservation.

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